

# Nominals and the grammar-discourse interface: address inversion in Italo-Romance

Alice Corr, University of Birmingham

**1. Introduction** This paper revisits speaker-affective vocatives in Italo-Romance involving a ‘reverse’ lexical indexation of the speaker-addressee relationship (Mess. *basta, a nonnuzza, basta* ‘enough, **my dear** [lit. the granny], that’s enough’, said by grandmother to grandchild). Our basic premise is that the empirical patterns of Italo-Romance address inversion reveal that the distinction between ‘regular’ addressee-oriented vocatives and speaker-oriented vocatives is not merely interpretative but syntactic, with theoretical significance for the modelling of the grammar-discourse interface in the nominal domain (Espinal 2013; Akkuş & Hill 2018; Ritter & Wiltschko 2019). By reframing the empirical facts within the TOPOLOGICAL MAPPING THEOREM (TMT) of the ‘grammar of reference’ (Longobardi 2005; Sheehan & Hinzen 2011; Martín & Hinzen 2014)—on which the grammatical architecture *yields* semantic reference—, we show how (Italo-Romance) vocatives and the speaker-addressee distinction can be ‘topologically’ mapped at the left edge of the nominal functional structure. Moreover, the distinction between Italo-Romance speaker- and addressee-oriented vocatives is argued to correspond to a phasal distinction, supporting the proposal that the grammar of reference is simultaneously a *phasal* model of grammar, wherein the ‘phases’ (Chomsky 2008) of recent syntactic theory instantiate referential-deictic units in the formal ontology of natural language (Arsenijević & Hinzen 2010; Sheehan & Hinzen 2011; Hinzen 2012).

**2. Observations** Italo-Romance speaker-oriented vocatives diverge systematically from addressee-oriented ones in their function, internal and external syntax (Abbate 2010; Iovino & Rossi 2014; Author 2020). Here, we focus on the following distinguishing properties of speaker-oriented vocatives: i) they involve a lexical “flip” of their descriptive meaning in their non-argumental (vocative) function, incurring an affective interpretation (1); ii) they disallow truncation but, when preceded by a prenominal vocative particle, they iii) permit the sandhi gemination process known as *raddoppiamento fonosintattico*, RF (2a-b). Moreover, whilst iv) they can surface as the sole vocative in a sentence, typically but not exclusively utterance-finally (1), they v) can co-occur (adjacently or discontinuously) with an addressee-oriented vocative, in which context, crucially, the order ADDRESSEE > SPEAKER is required (3a-b):

- (1) Fannellë, a ziziè (Pign.)  
do.IMP=it the aunt  
‘Do it, **my darling** (≠ aunt)’ (said by aunt to nephew/niece; (Rizza 2012:3)
- (2) a Me lo fai un caffè, (a) zi’ / (a) no’? (Voc<sub>ADDR</sub> / \*Voc<sub>SPKR</sub>)  
‘Can you make me a coffee, aunty (*zia*) / grandpa (*nono*)?’  
b Me lo fai un caffè, a {zia/\*zzi} / a {nonno/\*nno}? (\*Voc<sub>ADDR</sub> / Voc<sub>SPKR</sub>)  
‘Can you make me a coffee, my dear?’ (said to child; Iovino & Rossi 2014:220)
- (3) a Forza dai va Olimpia dormi, **a nonna** (reg.It.)  
INTJ INTJ INTJ Olimpia sleep.IMP PTC grandma  
‘C’mon Olimpia, go to sleep, **dear**’ (grandmother to grandchild; Corr 2016:10)  
b\* Forza dai va **a nonna** dormi, Olimpia (reg.It.)  
INTJ INTJ INTJ PTC granny sleep.IMP Olimpia

**3. Framework** On the TMT approach, words have no fixed semantic type but gain reference through insertion into the grammatical structure in line with a basic configurational template composed of a descriptive ‘interior’ and a grammatical ‘edge’ ([<sub>Edge</sub> [INTERIOR]]), where expansion and movement into the edge correlates with an increase of referential strength (and, concomitantly, a decreased reliance on descriptive interior for a syntactic object’s interpretation). In the nominal domain, lexicalisation of D (It. *Cerco [una/la [macchina]]* ‘I am looking for a/the car’) and N-to-D movement (*Cerco [Gianni [Gianni]]* ‘seek.1SG Gianni’) respectively yield an indefinite/definite and maximally-specific ‘rigid’ DP. Deictically-anchored expressions are optionally (*Cerco [questa [(macchina)]]* ‘seek.1SG this (car/one)’) )

or, in the case of person reference (*[Io [ø]] cerco* ‘I seek.1SG’), *exclusively* reliant on interpretation at the phasal edge as a function of their referential strength, whose ‘heaviness’ permits the omission of the descriptive/lexical ‘core’.

**4. Analysis** Since personal names and pronouns respectively involve movement into and direct merge of morpholexical material in the nominal edge, leaving the predicational interior empty (vacated by copy-deletion in the case of N-to-D movement), evidence from ‘regular’ vocatives involving particle-N combinations (It. *O tu, O Gianni*, Moro 2003:252ff) requires us to posit extra structure at the phasal edge to accommodate the prenominal particle, yielding the template in (4a), which we generalise for all vocatives (4b). A key advantage of the proposed template is that it simultaneously provides a means of modelling the lexical “flip” as a function of the grammatical encoding of the argumental vs. non-argumental distinction within the internal build of the vocative XP. On this view, the lexical content of N has one reading in its argumental position—viz. the descriptive one—but incurs a distinct, non-lexical interpretation in its non-argumental one (4c):

- (4) a  $[\text{Edge } O \text{ tu/Gianni } [\text{INT } \emptyset/\text{Gianni}]] = [\text{Voc } O [\text{D } \text{tu/Gianni } [\text{N } \emptyset/\text{Gianni}]]]$   
 b  $[\text{Edge } \text{Gianni } \text{Gianni} [\text{INT } \text{Gianni}]] = [\text{Voc } \text{Gianni} [\text{D } \text{Gianni} [\text{N } \text{Gianni}]]]$   
 c  $[\text{D } \text{mamma}_\emptyset [\text{N } \text{mamma}]]$  vs.  $[\text{Voc } \text{mamma}_{\text{voc}} [\text{D } \text{mamma}_\emptyset [\text{N } \text{mamma}]]]$   
     ‘mummy’ vs. ‘darling’ (≠ ‘mummy’)

However, the attestation  $\text{Voc}_{\text{PTC}} + \text{Voc}_{\text{N}}$  expressions in address inversion, e.g., Pign. *a mammë*, ‘PTC **darling!**’ (< ‘mummy’), necessitates the projection of further structure to accommodate i) the insertion of the particle, and ii) N-to-Voc movement, in order for N to incur its non-argumental reading (5):

- (5)  $[\text{Edge } A \text{ mammë}_{\text{voc}} \text{mammë} [\text{INT } \text{mammë}]] = [\text{Voc } A [\text{mammë}_{\text{voc}} [\text{D } \text{mammë}_\emptyset [\text{N } \text{mammë}]]]]$   
     ‘My child!’ (≠ ‘Mother!’)

Furthermore, evidence from RF suggests that the distinction between addressee-oriented and speaker-oriented vocatives corresponds to a *phasal* distinction. Specifically, the availability of RF (*A ppapà!* ‘My son!’ vs. *A papà!* ‘Daddy!’) is contingent on a local syntactic configuration—which recent research has shown to be a phasal domain (D’Alessandro & Biberauer 2006; Bošković 2016:34-36; Ledgeway 2018)—between the two constituents (here,  $\text{Voc}_{\text{PTC}}$  and  $\text{Voc}_{\text{N}}$ ) on which the sandhi process acts. Accordingly, we can deduce that these linearly-adjacent constituents are in a local, phasal configuration in speaker-oriented vocatives (which permit RF), but not in addressee-oriented vocatives (which ban RF).

Finally, we present evidence from truncation which enables us to conclude that addressee-oriented vocatives involve extra structure vis-à-vis speaker-oriented ones. Drawing on the TMT’s hypothesis that omission of morpholexical material is a function of the heaviness of the edge, we reconceptualise the licensing of truncation as a syntactic condition, viz. the expansion of the phasal template at its leftmost edge. On this view, vocatives permitting truncation are those that have moved even further into the edge, and are, as a consequence, less ‘reliant’ on descriptive content. Since only addressee-oriented vocatives can be subject to this phonological process, they must involve extra structure (or movement thereto) in their internal build vis-à-vis speaker-oriented vocatives, the motivation for which, per TMT principles, is the need to gain the appropriate reference. Our findings thus not only support the proposal that the speaker-addressee distinction has correlates in nominal syntactic structure, but provides conceptual motivation via an extended ‘grammar of reference’ and, more broadly, lends credence to the idea that the most leftward functional projections have a fundamentally distinct interaction with PF-interface (Giorgi 2014; d’Alessandro & van Oostendorp 2016; Floricic & Molinu 2018).

*Selected references:* **Abbate, 2010.** L’“allocuzione inversa” nell’italiano meridionale. *La comunicazione parlata* 3. **Akkuş & Hill, 2018.** The speaker in inverse vocatives. *WCCFL* 35. **Iovino & Rossi, 2014.** Alcune riflessioni sul “Vocativo Inverso” tra pragmatica e sintassi. *Le mille vite del dialetto*. **Longobardi, 2005.** Toward a unified grammar of reference. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 24. **Martin & Hinzen, 2014.** The Grammar of the Essential Indexical. *Lingua* 148. **Sheehan & Hinzen, 2011.** Moving towards the Edge. *Linguistic Analysis* 37(3-4).